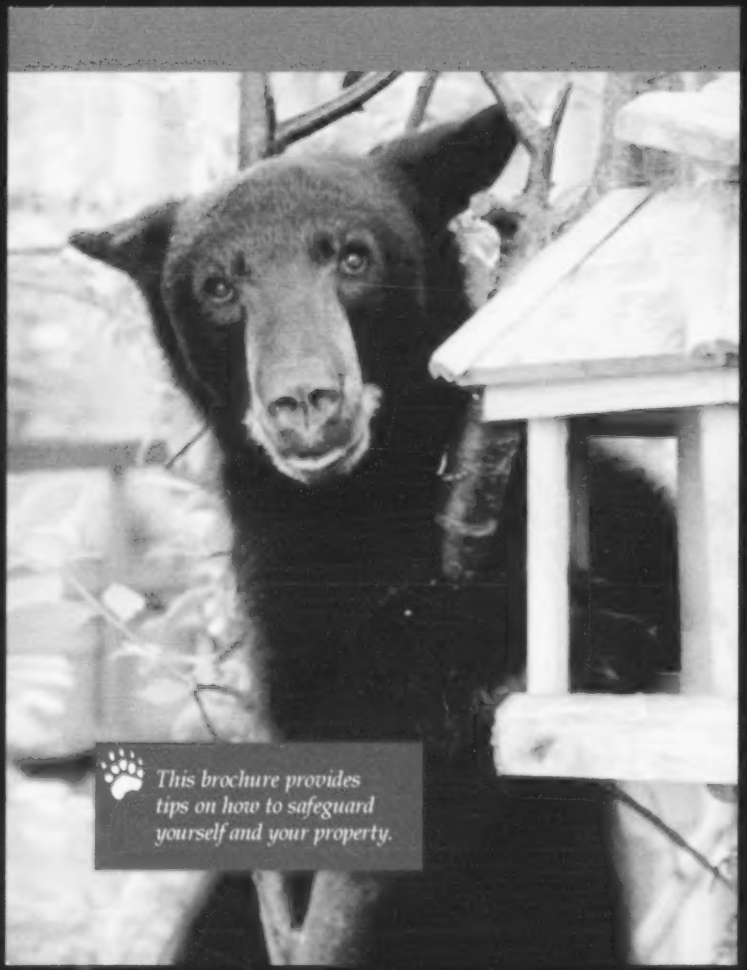
BE BEAR SMART

Protect Yourself – Protect our Wildlife

Part of:
TOMORROW NOW
Manitoba's GREEN Plan

Manitoba



This brochure provides tips on how to safeguard yourself and your property.

LIVING AND VISITING IN BEAR COUNTRY

Black bears are found throughout Manitoba. People who live or work in, or visit wooded areas are encouraged to *Be Bear Smart*. That means knowing how to minimize or avoid contact with these animals and how to react if you do encounter a bear.

ABOUT BLACK BEARS

Although the coat colour is commonly black, it can be brown, cinnamon, blond or combinations of these colours. Black bears are intelligent, powerful, but shy animals preferring to avoid humans. They are superior climbers, strong swimmers and when running can reach speeds of 50 kilometres (30 miles) per hour.

Bears are always in search of food, motivated by sights, sounds, memories and particularly, odours. When bears find an easy source of food at a residence or campsite, they begin to associate this food source with people and dwellings. When bears discover that humans can be intimidated, they can get bold in acquiring this food.

Bears that learn food is available from residences or campsites become nuisances. This results in people asking for them to be removed. However, relocating or destroying bears does not resolve the problem. Other bears will take their place. The better solution is to remove food sources from residences and campsites. This will reduce the attraction for them to visit in the first place.

BE BEAR SMART

Here are some simple suggestions on how you can be *Bear Smart*:

- Never approach or crowd a bear – admire it from a safe distance.
- Never feed a bear, whether intentionally or inadvertently – it's unwise and unlawful if it creates a hazard to people and property.
- Always hike with a partner or in a group, and let someone know where you will be and when you expect to return.
- Keep dogs on a leash as they may provoke an attack.
- Carry bear deterrent spray when in bear country.

Homeowners, cottagers and campers can discourage bears by handling food and garbage responsibly.

Homeowners and cottagers

- Double bag garbage and place it in a bear-resistant container, secured building or fenced area.
- Clean garbage containers regularly with bleach or ammonia.
- Take garbage with you when you leave or ask a neighbour to put out your garbage just before pick-up.
- Don't burn garbage.
- Don't compost any food items outside.
- Remove all birdfeeders between April and November.
- Clean barbeques thoroughly after every use. Wrap in plastic and store indoors when not in use.
- Feed pets and keep their food dishes indoors.
- Pick all ripened fruit from fruit trees. Remove fallen fruit from the ground.
- Be aware that odours from cooking, baking and composting can attract bears.

Relocating or destroying bears does not resolve the problem unless the food sources are also removed.

Campers

- Keep campsites clean.
- Store food and food-related items in airtight storage containers.
- Prepare all garbage for proper disposal.
- Use bear-proof refuse containers where provided.
- Don't cook, eat or store any food items in your tent.
- If you have a vehicle, store all food inside and out of sight.
- Cooking highly odorous foods such as bacon or fish could attract bears.
- Don't dispose of dish water around or near your tent.

SAFE CAMPSITE

UNSAFE CAMPSITE

AVOID BEARS TO STAY SAFE

The best way to stay safe is to avoid all contact with bears. Try following these safety tips while in bear country:

- Learn about black bears, their behaviour and habitat.
- Stay alert and watch for bear signs like tracks, droppings, claw marks on trees, dug up ant hills or rolled over logs.
- Don't obstruct your hearing by listening to music on headphones.
- When hiking, carry bear deterrent spray and consider taking a walking stick, hunting knife and an air horn as deterrents if you encounter a bear.
- Always hike with a partner or in a group, and let someone know where you will be and when you expect to return.
- Stay in a group - don't allow anyone to straggle behind or rush ahead.
- Keep dogs on a leash as they may provoke an attack.
- Make your presence known by making noises, such as talking, singing or using a noise maker.
- Do not wear cosmetics or scented hair or body fragrances.

The best way to stay safe is to avoid all contact with bears.

If you see a bear

- Stop. Remain calm. Assess the situation.
- Do not turn and run as this may prompt a chase response.
- Do not climb a tree or enter water, as these options will not guarantee your safety.
- If a bear is in a tree, simply leave the area the way you came.
- If the bear is unaware of you, leave the area calmly and quietly when the bear is not looking in your direction.
- If you decide to take a detour, choose a wide path that will not intersect the bear if it is moving.
- If the bear becomes aware of you, calmly identify yourself as human by talking to it in a low voice while waving your arms as you back away slowly to increase your distance.
- Be ready to deploy (or use) the bear deterrent spray.
- Avoid direct eye contact.
- If the bear seems unconcerned, leave the area calmly and quietly.

BEARS WILL DISPLAY THREE TYPES OF BEHAVIOUR. THESE TIPS WILL HELP YOU ASSESS THE SITUATION AND STAY SAFE.

A Threatened *(Defensive)* Bear

A bear that feels threatened will often display signs of agitation and stress through vocal and/or visual cues such as huffing, popping of the jaws, pacing, swinging of the head or excessive salivation. This may escalate to slapping the ground or a tree, or to a bluff charge, stopping short of contact. The head will be lowered with ears drawn back while facing you. This behaviour is associated with defensive bears.

A bear that feels threatened will often display signs of agitation and stress through vocal and/or visual cues.

If a threatened bear charges

- Stand your ground, be non-threatening.
- Talk to the bear in a calm voice.
- Be ready to deploy (or use) the bear deterrent spray.
- When the bear has moved off, proceed on your way.

If a threatened bear makes contact with you

- Fall to the ground laying face down with legs slightly apart.
- Lock your fingers behind your head/neck.
- If the bear flips you over, roll back onto your stomach.
- Do not struggle or cry out.
- Do not move until you are sure the bear has left.
- If the attack lasts more than several minutes, the bear is not attacking defensively anymore. Fight back using a hunting knife, rocks, sticks, car keys, or any other available weapon. Use your bear deterrent spray.

A Non-threatening Bear

If a bear approaches in a non-threatening manner, it may be curious, used to people, after your food, wanting right of way, or to assert dominance.

If a non-threatening bear approaches you

- Stop and remain calm. Talk to the bear in a firm voice. Assess the situation.
- Do not turn and run unless reaching safety is a guarantee.
- Group together.
- Be ready to use a deterrent, such as bear deterrent spray, a hunting knife or air horn.
- Stand your ground until the bear leaves the area.

A Stalking *(Predatory)* Bear

A stalking bear's approach will be deliberate and silent. This bear is the type you should be most concerned with. The head will be up and ears erect, displaying no signs of stress. This behaviour is associated with predatory bears.

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If a stalking bear continues to follow you

- Stop and stand your ground.
- Make direct eye contact.
- Act aggressively to persuade the bear you are not easy prey.
- Shout, wave your arms, stomp your feet.
- Elevate yourself onto a log or rock and raise your jacket to look bigger.
- Be ready to use your bear deterrent spray.

If a stalking bear attacks you

- Fight back with anything at hand. Use your bear deterrent spray, walking stick, hunting knife, firearm, rocks, sticks, binoculars, car keys, or even bare hands.
- Strike for the bear's eyes or nose.
- Kick and yell.
- Be relentless, you are fighting for your life.

BEAR DETERRENT SPRAY

Bear ("*capsicum*") spray is a recommended deterrent to approaches and potential attacks by black bears. It should never be a substitute for practicing the principles of ***Being Bear Smart and learning how to avoid encounters with black bears.***

CAUTION NOTE: Bear deterrent spray does not guarantee the prevention of an attack or injury from an attack by a black bear.

WHAT IS BEAR DETERRENT SPRAY?

- It is used to deter an approaching bear and give you an opportunity to leave the area while the bear is dealing with an unpleasant irritant.
- It is not a repellent and if used as such may actually attract bears. Do NOT spray clothing, tents, etc. with it.
- It is composed of capsicum (derivative of cayenne pepper), capsaicinoids, and an aerosol to propel the capsicum.
- Its effects are temporary and non-lethal.
- It acts as a powerful local irritant to a bear's nose, eyes, and respiratory system.
- When deployed, the spray exits the canister at 120-kilometres per hour. Even in unfavorable wind conditions, some of the spray will still deploy in front of the bear.
- Bear deterrent spray may also be called bear pepper spray, bear deterrent pepper spray or bear attack deterrent. **Bear deterrent spray should not be confused with pepper spray.** These are two different products.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN BEAR DETERRENT SPRAY

There are several brands of spray with different characteristics. Choose a brand that has a label on the canister declaring the product:

- is a bear attack deterrent or bear deterrent, and clearly identifies the product as an *irritant* to deter bears from attacking people.
- has a capsicum content between one and two per cent; the higher, the better.

- Choose a larger size can if possible. A small can is 290 grams; large is 325 grams.
- Check the expiry date. The capsicum content does not lessen, but the aerosol component does (limiting the range and effectiveness of the spray).
- Check manufacturers' websites for dispersal characteristics. Look for a:
  - spray distance greater than eight metres
  - spray time of six seconds for a small canister and up to eight seconds for a large canister
  - spray that dispenses in a cloud rather than a narrow stream
- Do not use bear deterrent spray that you suspect has been frozen.

HOW TO USE BEAR DETERRENT SPRAY

- It is recommended you first purchase either a regular canister or an inert canister (with no capsaicin, where available) and learn how they work:
  - Deploy it in a downwind situation.
  - Aim and point the canister downward as it will recoil upwards.
  - Have water available to wash your hands after practicing.
  - Spray in one or two second bursts moving backwards after each burst. You have approximately six to eight seconds of spray time.
- Though you may not see a bear, if you see signs of a bear, have the spray canister in your hand ready, with the safety off and leave the area the way you came.
- Practice removing the canister quickly from the holster and taking off the safety – a charging bear 10 metres away will reach you in four seconds or less – well before you can pull the canister out and remove the safety; so practise.

IS IT LEGAL TO POSSESS?

Under the Criminal Code of Canada, deterrent sprays that use the natural ingredient capsaicin are classified as prohibited weapons unless used for the purposes which they are manufactured such as bear deterrent or bear attack deterrent. Fishers, hikers and hunters may carry bear deterrent spray if they can reasonably show that its purpose is to protect them against an animal attack.

BEAR ATTACKS ARE EXTREMELY RARE

Between 1900 and 2009, there have been 63 fatal black bear attacks in North America with stalking, predatory attacks being more frequent than threatened, defensive attacks. In spite of thousands of encounters between people and bears, there have only been three black bear-inflicted deaths in Manitoba. All have been the result of stalking, predatory attacks.

THANK YOU FOR BEING "BEAR SMART"

Manitoba has a healthy black bear population and we are committed to ensure that bears remain part of our rich heritage and landscape. By working together, and being *Bear Smart*, we can safeguard people and property and reduce the number of human-bear conflicts.

If you are having a problem with bears, contact your nearest Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship office. For more bear information visit **www.manitoba.ca/blackbear** or call **1-800-214-6497**.

By working together, we can reduce the number of human-bear conflicts.

You are in *Bear Country!*

Don't feed Bears!

Keep a clean campsite!

MANITOBA CONSERVATION AND WATER STEWARDSHIP
Wildlife Branch
Box 24, 200 Saulteaux Crescent
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3J 3W3
Phone: 204-945-7775
www.manitoba.ca/blackbear

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2013